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A POET-PREACHER COMBINATION

CHRISTIAN COMMUNES SCARE
MANITOBA

FRED STOVER - CHRISTIAN LEADER

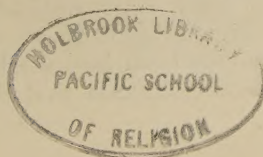
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U. S. A. TODAY

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A POET-PREACHER COMBINATION

A poet worthy of the name is a maker, an "unacknowledged legislator." He makes verses and he makes institutions. He forms the conscience of mankind. Those of us who find it hard to drink the muddied water of modernist poetry should remember that all the true poetry set down on tablet or parchment or written in sand since time's beginning has been simply an attempt to celebrate things we *do* understand quite well, home, birth, love, death, seed, harvest, building, sailing, sheep-herding, everything we do, understanding it and loving it as we do it. The Western cowboy who sings "Git along little dogie," is poet-kin to the girl in the Western Isles who sings in 7-time her milking refrain. The men of iron who sang at the windlass in Nova Scotian harbors hark back to those who sang at the launching of the Birlinn in Mac Mair's poem.

All poetry is love song. Indifference is dumb, pure hate a raucous cry. Love always sings, even when hurt, whether it be the love of a man for a maid or love of those long Whitman lists of everything alive. Labor union songs, "We Shall Not Be Moved," Joe Hill songs, are really love songs, in defence of hearth and home, in defiance of their destroyers. Living song is loving song. All else is devil's doggerel. And songs are hymns; in song is the truth that quite helplessly speaks in theology of deepest reality. True preaching must be poetry for the sermon is where theology gets up on its feet and spreads its wings and flies. Takes flight from prose to poetry. Some of the Welsh preachers knew it as *hwyf*. But it must be fresh. It cannot be imitated. It must come unbidden from the ground of life straight through the preacher to his people. When it is imitated it drives true men from the house of God. It is that whining tone so characteristic of our pulpit in these days. Oh for the freshness of true preaching!

The world is silent, waiting. The world is a vast desert, parched and thirsty for true preaching. The poets mumble, not owning their own minds. The preachers vegetate in the cellars of the rich. When poets preach and preachers sing then shall the earth stay new.

The Rev. Donald L. West of Georgia is exactly what we are talking about, a poet who preaches and who has discovered and is working in co-operation with a spiritual genius, a preaching miner, the Rev. Charlie T. Pratt, founder and head of the *Church of God of the Union Assembly*. This is a most unusual church, for its primary concern is: justice for the disinterested, those exploited and discriminated against. Pratt doesn't have time to mess around with himself in the current Kierkegaardian fashion. He and his 35 churches are not distributing points for pessimism but for happy positive living. West edits the church paper, the *Southerner*, published monthly in Dalton, Georgia, on their own church press, a paper, we believe, unique in religious journalism, for it is not only outspokenly on the side of labor but it enters actively into the fight to organize unions. It has already earned the enmity of the Northern bosses who have moved their factories into the South for the very reason that Southern labor is unorganized and

more easily exploited. Material damage has been done to the church printing plant. Members of the church have been blacklisted by a large factory. But they stand fast. They refuse to hide behind platitudes and abstractions and a bogus neutrality. They turn their backs on generalities and come to grips with facts. Every column of their paper blazes with love and indignation, naming names, leaving no loop-holes of escape for those who profiteer and exploit. Tried and true men of the South, Aubrey Williams, Alva Taylor, and others, are gathering around this paper. Local farmers with fine natural gifts of expression, even children not out of their teens, contribute to its liveliness and pointedness. Away up North here in Nova Scotia I feel as close to Charlie Pratt as if he lived across the road. The New Christian hails the Church of God of the Union Assembly as an agency that is hammering out the new conscience of the New South.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNES SCARE MANITOBA

We cannot help wondering at times about the sincerity of those who pretend to be so horror-stricken by the advance of "atheistic communism," appearing to imply that it isn't so much the communism they object to as the atheism. Especially when we realize that these newly armored champions of theism have been hitherto known as a thoroughly materialistic class of individuals. It must cause hilarity in the nether regions to see these gentry, whose philosophy is gold and whose religion is selfishness, crusading for God. Is this why the churches are filling up? Does Mammon seek refuge in God's house?

Light may be shed on this matter if we consider the fate of certain communists *who are at the same time theists*. A few months ago we sketched the story of the Anabaptist communes of Moravia in the 16th century. Readers will be interested to know that, unpublicized, unnoticed, remnants of these people migrated to this continent, where they have survived the onslaughts of modern materialistic capitalism and live today quietly, *and altogether too successfully!*

In Canada, for instance, in the province of Manitoba there are 22 colonies, 2600 of these people. Alberta has about twice that number. Alberta has imposed some restrictions on their expansion and their neighbors in Manitoba seem to be getting ready to do the same thing.

In Oakville, Manitoba, 33 miles West of Winnipeg, a group called the Community Welfare Association, of Cartier and Portage rural communities, has drawn up a resolution describing these Anabaptist colonies, now called Hutterites (from their founder Jakob Huter, burned at the stake, 1536), as "a body of strict practicing Communists under a strongly organized semi-alien, self-seeking and aggressive Communistic system."

J. P. Bend, association president, says the Hutterites at their present rate of expansion would swallow up Manitoba by the year 2050. Two months ago the Union of Manitoba Municipalities asked for legislation forbidding Hutterites to start new colonies within 40 miles of existing ones and limiting the size of colonies to from 6000 to 10,000 acres.

A report from Oakville by the Canadian Press says, "The religious sect is distinguished by a communal way of life, with all property owned in common and with each member supplied the necessities of life instead of paid wages. Neighboring farmers hold that this self-denial is unfair competition, allowing the colonies to prosper financially and permitting them to offer high prices for new land. A high birth rate in the colonies forces them to expand." The fear is that these people are building "a Communist country within a country."

Well, there it is. The good people of Manitoba have been infected with the prevailing North American hysteria, and they are in a panic of fear lest the too-religious Hutterites buy their land away from them at high prices. This theory, this way of life, that was supposed to be against human nature and couldn't possibly work, is working. All too well. It is beating them on the field of strict economics, precisely where it was said it would fail.

There is no complaint about atheism. No complaint about law-breaking or overthrowing the government by force and violence. The crime here is the same as it was in Moravia. They are too successful. They practise self-denial. They save their money, pay cash, and keep out of the hands of the mortgage holders. There is no complaint about their farming practices; they are not soil-miners. Their sin is that they work *together* and prosper *together*. They rise and fall together. Their destiny is one destiny. They live this way because they have good reason to believe that the first disciples of Christ lived this way. They never heard of Marx. In fact they are an ironic foot-note to his philosophy of history. But this doesn't save them from the jealousy of their neighbors and the envy and fear of the commercial culture that surrounds them.

Does not this incident write large the imminent fate of a way of life that finds it necessary to attack these peaceable kindly folk for following Christ?

FRED STOVER—CHRISTIAN LEADER

Quoted below are some final paragraphs of Fred Stover's presidential address at last year's convention of the Iowa Farmers Union. There is such a thing as legitimate pride and Stover's pride in his organization is more than justified. In fact it was a necessary duty for him to point as he did to its record. For it was one of the very few who stood firm for peace and justice in the test year of 1950, when liberalism so largely lost its nerve and plumped for the Dulles-Rhee "police action" war in Korea. And since then these family farmers have withstood the punishing onslaught of the American plutocracy-in-government which marked them out for liquidation. Even today they are still marked out, and they still stand, which is good cause for the wholesome pride of their leader, who, more than any other American figure, symbolizes the best of America, its brightest hope and its deepest promise. Stover's words vibrate with a religious devotion to truth, and it is to this we

would call attention. Woven into all his talks with his people are constant references to the source of his inspiration. The following excerpts might well be entitled (from his closing phrase), "The Cutting Edge of Truth."

"We seek the truth," he says, "and try to act on the truth. We always want to be free to follow the truth wherever truth may lead us. We are against tyranny anytime, anywhere, no matter what kind of mask it wears or what kind of label it has on it.

"We are against repressive laws and police state action by any country, by any government.

"But what the fanatical red-baiters want is not only for us to criticize tyranny, but to *first* criticize it in Russia, and then *only* criticize Russia—and then we find they want us to not only *abstain* from criticizing it here, but to *approve* it here and elsewhere in the name of anti-communism—which is an abundant source of gain for those who profit from wars.

They want us to hate the same ones they hate. That too has a parallel in history, "If you do not crucify him, you are no friend of Caesar's."

"The history of the world, of our country and of our union is star-studded with glorious instances and episodes where valiant groups, smaller than our union, achieved victory in a struggle for goals more remote than those we seek. The way to reach these goals is to call for more struggle, not less; more courage, not less; more confidence in our members, not less; more faith in our own strength, not less. For the only answer to the swelling demands for parity for farmers is parity. The only answer for the demands for a better living is a better living. The only answer to the longing for peace is peace; not an armed peace, not cold war, not "police action," not a mixture of a little peace and a little war, but just peace.

"Now if we believe in these things, we should not just give lip service to the ideas, but we should support them in all our actions. Speaking for peace and acting for war is what is making us into a peace-talking, war-waging society.

"We cannot ignore the trends that are clearly dishonest and bigoted just to avoid controversy and still stay really honest ourselves. If we are going to avoid ending up as tough-skinned hypocrites, *then we simply must try to maintain some resemblance and relationship between what we say and what we do.* That is what we are trying very hard to do. That is what I am sure all good I.F.U. members will try to do.

"That is what makes our Union the kind of a Union that it is.

"The way of the trailblazers, pioneers and crusaders has never been easy. The road has never been crowded. We need to remember in times like this that popularity is not always the earmark of greatness.

"Oh, how we are all tempted by the glittering jewel of popularity, that false and tawdry popularity, currently mass produced by an invisible government, the press. Ladies and gentlemen, the price of that shoddy jewel is too high! It is too high if it involves the suppression or distortion of important truth.

"I don't believe we can put our moral principles in one pocket or compartment for safe keeping and use them only on Sunday, and our selfish practices somewhere else where we can reach them handy to skin our fellow-men the other six days in the week, and yet avoid confusion and retain our character and integrity.

"It seems we are supposed to believe that the theory of individual aggrandizement and collective irresponsibility is the American way—and the Christian way.

"But we were taught that when Jesus went into Jerusalem, the richest capital and with the richest bank, He was going against the financial interests, yes and the militarism of His time. He didn't go there to seek popularity. Farmers Union people who go on the hunt for popularity should not pretend to emulate the humble Nazarene."

"Too many have given up the lonely pursuit of real freedom, for the comfort of the illusion of respectability. It is an illusion. Not even our worst detractors respect us if we cower and cringe. They respect us when we don't.

"They are working overtime to induce us *not* to arrive at our convictions by our own thinking, but to accept the assumptions that they have ready-made for us. I am radical enough to think that wholesale killing by war must be made a social crime, just as personal killing has been made a crime, or a race that Christ taught not to kill will soon exterminate itself.

"Every member of the I.F.U. can feel proud because we did not duck, dodge or crawl when the whip lash of reaction was used to try to black-snake us into retreat.

"Isn't it a satisfaction to know that we did not turn yellow?

"It is a wholesome feeling of intellectual health. I think it must be a sick and depressing feeling to look into a looking glass and see in the windows of one's soul that he has been a sham and a cowardly cheat.

"We need to recover or redefine the distinction between dissent and treason. Watch out for those who equate the two. Remember that we are a change-seeking organization, and when we seek changes, we are always attacked by the tory defenders of the status quo.

"Farmers Union members have always believed in applying the teachings of Jesus to all social relationships, to economic and business arrangements, so that the teachings of Jesus may be practiced and realized in our day, here and now.

"We know that others in the past have paid heavy penalties for holding to this view. Ghandi held that the very right to live accrues to one *only if he does his duty as a citizen of the world.*

"I believe in reinforcing the truths we are devoted to, the convictions we hold with the demonstration of our own life. Thus can we give the widest truth the sharpest cutting edge.

RECOGNIZE CHINA NOW

Elmore Philpott (liberal) of Vancouver has proposed to the Canadian House of Commons that it consider the advisability of recogniz-

ing China. The Canadian Minister of External Affairs, Lester Pearson, wrote in a recent *Look* Magazine that we should recognize the fact that the Peking government and not Chiang Kai-shek, "is in control of continental China and likely to remain so." Pearson appears to write as if Someone South of the Border were breathing down his neck. Such careful phrasing, "in control of" and "continental." Yet even this will be highly displeasing to the Senator from Formosa. All this pussy-footing indicates how far Canada has drifted from mother's apron strings and has come under the influence of the boy next door. For Britain long ago recognized and has been doing her best to trade with China, in spite of serious obstruction from US-Formosa.

It is to be hoped that Canada will soon find the intestinal fortitude to follow Britain's lead, and indeed do the USA a good turn by getting them off the hook of a ridiculous and illogical position. For Canada to come out forthrightly and recognize the Chinese Government would be good for trade, good for peace, and it would be splendid for the self-respect of Canadians.

Or, are we to conclude that the Canadian Liberal Party is more conservative than the British Conservative Party? Prime Minister Eden comes to Washington to find out whether American foreign affairs are to be guided by a pacification policy or by Dulles' "brink of war" policy. The British people, Tory and Labor alike, are fed up with the latter and Eden hopes against hope he can nudge US policy in the former direction. How wonderful it would be if Canada could throw her weight in the scales on the side of rationality, trade, and peace!

MR. LUCE'S FAUX PAS:

And now what a mess Mr. Luce's *Life* writers have got themselves into, trying to pull Republican chestnuts out of the fire, going overboard in praise of Dulles, calling him virtually a knight in white armor who rides furiously up to the brink of the precipice of world suicide and reins in his horse at the very last instant (a la the movies) and saving civilization from the abyss. It is almost in a class with some of Hitler's Big Lies. For it was never Dulles' rein that stopped the horse. The horse balked. The American people balked in Korea. Eisenhower balked in Formosa. England and France balked in Indo China. If Dulles had ever got hold of a horse that didn't have more sense than he had we should all have been blown to smithereens. If the reader thinks we are using too strong a word when we compare this article with the lies of Hitler he may be reassured by the statement of the conservative Walter Lippman who charges the *Life* article with being "a fundamentally false account." That tells it. First Churchill, then Eisenhower and the Russians have declared that "there is no alternative to peace," the reason being that each side has the means available for annihilating the other. In such circumstances there can be no "policy of deterrence instituted by Dulles to preserve peace," as the *Life* article says there is. What there can be, however, is a policy of blackmail.

Dulles' friends, frightened by the uproar the article has caused, are now backing up a little. They say he didn't himself advance to the brink

but was pushed to the brink by enemy action. This hardly fits the facts however. Take one instance. Rhee branded the North Korean prisoners of war and drove them out of his stockades, past the benevolent bayonets of the Americans, to be pressed into his army. This act of ultimate provocation was perpetrated by the American side. Obviously the North Koreans cannot be charged with this. Yet *Life* pictures it as "the first of three times during the Eisenhower administration when the US was brought perilously close to war—and when the new policy of deterrence instituted by Dulles preserved peace." If *Life* could tell the truth it would have said not "was brought" but "brought itself." And the deterrent in this case must have been self-control on the part of the black-mailed party.

We must realize that the premise of a stalemated peace is that all parties to it should be in their right minds. Is it in keeping with sanity for the US-Formosa alliance to insist on hanging on to Chinese territory (islands in China waters used as bases for obstructing China's vital trade lanes) and maintaining the fiction of "Nationalist China." There is a crying need here that Britain and Canada should use every effort to bring the light of common sense to the rulers of the USA and persuade them to give up a position which is bare naked of logic, of legitimacy, and of honor.

SALVATION BY GRACE

William Hordern of Swarthmore College in "A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology," which is exactly what its name implies prophesies that the immediate future of theology lies with "modern orthodoxy." Orthodoxy, on the way down and out at the beginning of this century, was saved by the First World War, he says. It is too early to say if its "new vigor" is a permanent recovery or if it is a last desperate effort. "But one thing is certain, orthodoxy has won the last couple of rounds on points and for the moment the crowd is with it."

A question occurs: Did the First World War put a horseshoe into one of the gloves of orthodoxy? And did the Second World War put another horseshoe into the other glove? Is the revival of orthodoxy due to the disillusionment caused by war and by the warmongers' need to rationalize the war system? Nothing fits in so well with *inevitable* war as *inevitable* sin. If human nature is in its origin sinful, "rotten to the core" as Prof. Estes used to say, we must expect it to behave badly. Such a theory works in cosily with the semi-chaos of exploitation and war.

This is not to say that Hordern's book is not valuable. It is. It is written in a very clear and unpretentious style and covers a great deal of ground with a minimum of fuss and bothersome detail. It gives an exciting account, full of penetrating insights, of modern Protestant thought from its great sources in the national churches (Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism) and the dissident sects, through Unitarianism, Deism, the liberal schools of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, the American

'social gospel', down to the neo-orthodoxy of Barth, Brunner and Niebuhr, and ending with the new approach of Paul Tillich, with whom Mr. Hordern worked in close contact at Union Theological Seminary.

It is to be regretted that the plan of the book could not have included an attempt to delve a little more deeply into some of the central teachings of Christianity, taking up such a doctrine as that of the Atonement, for instance, and canvassing it from various points of view to see what it has to say to the man of today. But of course it is difficult to cover ground and dig it at the same time. He does present an aspect of the Atonement, namely, Salvation by Grace, and in doing so cites the parable of the Prodigal Son. He says, "We must be careful not to interpret this too sentimentally. It is not simply a matter of letting bygones be bygones. The true parent does not simply condone the erring boy . . . True parental forgiveness . . . hurts the parent; it rends his soul. It is not easy to embrace the neck that was last caressed by harlots; it is not easy to forget the scorn and ridicule of the neighbors: but, despite the cost, the father forgives." But there is no indication of such lack of ease in the parable. Indeed there is every opposite indication. There appears instead a passionate eagerness to forgive. May it not be that the father forgives because *in the very texture of his own inner self* he knows the reality of the temptations his boy has experienced? He understands the pull of instinct and habit and pride and feels sorrow (yes, shame) that such pulls and the painful struggle of resistance is involved in the growth of the soul. Is not this the reason we must use the word "grace" to describe the reach of the Soul of all life to the individual soul? It is because He shares with us our struggle, and we, knowing He is saddened by it, *are strengthened in it!* Thus Jesus shared the guilt of the woman taken in adultery, writing in the sand and saying, "Neither do I condemn thee." In story after story Jesus tried to tell us that God weeps not merely that we stray but that He made a world in which *to grow we must stray*. It was the only way to grow a soul and it was a bitter hard way into lonely self-locked prideful places man must go before he finds his way back to the Eden of his oneness with his fellows and his Maker. The terrible feeling of guilt which has wrongly lain like a dark cloud over the history of Christianity was the very thing that Jesus tried to lift from the hearts of men. If God took guilt on Himself in this understandable way then the guilt was taken from us, *because shared with us*. A good doctor of the mind knows this, for one of his most important tasks is to lift from his patient whatever load of guilt may entangle him and prevent a wholesome adjustment to life.

The Atonement and Salvation by Grace are central to Christian orthodoxy, and as they have been usually presented, even in these so-called enlightened days, they have been responsible for more rejection of Christianity than Marxism and Darwinism put together. Yet, properly realized, they can make half-men whole, saving them from that despair that is the ultimate error. For it is an atonement to man as well as to God. And it is an atonement by God as well as by man. It happen-

ed in Jesus in Palestine 2000 years ago, but if it happened only there it might as well not have happened. One of the worst of all heresies is that a *mere* belief that it happened then and there can save a man here and now. This is a characteristically Protestant heresy, this putting it all off onto Jesus as the Substitute or goat for our mistakes. Mistakes we all make, sometimes tragic, mistakes the ill effects of which neither God nor man can eradicate yet we must never let them get us 'down and out.' It is wrong to rationalize them, to set them up into a system of inevitability. That is a form of idolatry, perhaps the worst form. It regulates evil, gives it a commanding position at the heart of the constitution of things. Perhaps the Irish Pelagius was nearer the truth than the African Augustine when he insisted that man is as free to choose good as evil. However, Calvin, the formative Protestant theological systematizer came down hard on the side of Augustine (perhaps because he better served his purpose against Rome) and Protestantism since Calvin has eased the consciences of the capitalist exploiter with the comforting saying: "Adam made us all damned sinners. Christ paid the debt." This is about the way it has come down to us in the preaching of orthodox Protestant churches.

There is a deep and dynamic truth at the heart of this doctrine of Salvation by Grace, a truth that does not contradict reason but that cannot be expressed in flat prose because it is an imaginative truth, a dare, a gamble, a faith, the sector of an arc that outreaches every circle. Theology can fence off errors from this truth, but cannot, unless caught up in passionate preaching, give it imaginative expression. If so caught up it heals men and then becomes a marching song and leads them out into the baptism of active participation in the growth of whole men.

THE GENIUS OF ISRAEL

When the leaders of Israel, the home and hope of the Jews of the world, tied themselves to the fortunes of American Big Business-in-Government they made a mistake. They were not true to the genius of Israel, historically the very source of democratic philosophy and today a brilliant example of that philosophy in action. For the USA has been under the control of an anti-democratic big business clique during most of modern Israel's history. Israel has depended on the support of American Zionism which has been unduly influenced by an opportunistic attitude towards American big business. Whereas other neutrals at least waited for the US to crack the whip before jumping through its hoops Israel has jumped first and then looked in vain for the lump of rewarding sugar. Big shots are like that. They don't mind buying off opposition but they are not in the habit of paying for what they can get for nothing.

This is all said of those elements of Israel's leadership which have been influenced by beneficiaries of US cold warriors. There are other elements, an obscurantist clerical group, an extreme nationalistic group, and a large sane element which would guide Israel into its own orbit (or into the Nehru orbit) independent of both sides of the cold war. There are good signs that this last counsel will prevail. Israel is Israel. It has

taken a rightful place in a world to whose history it has made monumental contributions. It must and will defend itself. It must and will free itself from tragic involvement with Western reaction.

USA: TODAY

In *USA Today* (Social Science Institute, Harborside, Maine) Helen and Scott Nearing present the picture of a country, once dedicated to freedom, now fallen into the clutches of an oligarchy of wealth and well advanced toward decay. Prof. Nearing is a brilliant and thoroughly honest social scientist, but, more than that, he is that rare combination of a wise man and a prophet. His judgments are stern. Yet, hopefully, much of this book is devoted to the development of Resistance inside the USA which will influence events more and more as the oligarchy bankrupts itself on the foreign field and at home.

The authors have travelled the States for years, back and forth, up and down, so that to scholarship is added much first hand documentation. Those familiar with the story of regimentation, repression, subversion of the Constitution, intellectual and spiritual slavery, as practised by the US oligarchy, will find it here illuminated by personal face-to-face experience of its horrible effects among the people. Read and re-read this book if you would understand what has happened to a great nation.

A PERSONAL WORD

The editor thanks all of you who have sent in renewals of subscriptions and support. Although we depend on these to continue publication we do not always have the facilities to send out reminders, depending in great measure on your thoughtfulness in this regard. And we are rarely disappointed.

We are an expression of the Resistance spoken of by the Nearings in *USA TODAY*. It is you, however, who *are* this resistance. We try to speak *your* mind. Our work covers nearly two decades and in these days of telescoped history that is a long time. Keep us strong. 1955 was a good year. 1956 will be better!

NEW CHRISTIAN

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